

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Baño de Oro

Other names/site number: La Piscina Pequeña, FS# 08160000015

Name of related multiple property listing:

New Deal Era Constructions in the Forest Reserves in Puerto Rico, 1933 – 1942

2. Location

Street & number: PR191, Km 12.1

City or town: Rio Grande State: PR County: Rio Grande

Not For Publication: ☐

Vicinity: ☒

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national X statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B X C D

Signature of certifying official

Date

Regional Forester, Southern Region (Region 8), USDA Forest Service

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Carlos A. Rubio-Cancela

State Historic Preservation Officer - Puerto Rico State Historic Preservation Office

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private:

☐

Public – Local

☐

Public – State

☐

Public – Federal

☒

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

☐

District

☐

Site

☐

Structure

☒

Object

☐

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

Recreation and Culture/Outdoor Recreation

Current Functions

Recreation and Culture/Outdoor Recreation

7. Description

Architectural Classification

Craftsman Style
Spanish Revival
Moderne Style

Materials:

Principal exterior materials of the property: Stone, Concrete, Terracotta.

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Baño de Oro pool (Figure 1) is a concrete irregular trapezoidal pool with an adjacent reinforced concrete rectangular bathhouse constructed on an unnamed creek at kilometer 12.1 on state road PR191, Jiménez ward on the Rio Grande Municipality, within the El Yunque National Forest (Figure 2). The pool was created on the causeway of an existing creek, with a stone masonry dam, and check dam on the east end. Adjacent is a Moderne Style reinforced concrete bathhouse building sporting a slanted porch in the Spanish Revival Style. The building is located to the south of the pool, built over a small artificial flat raised platform buttressed by a reinforced concrete retention wall. Built in the early 1930s this complex was the first water-recreation facility constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in El Yunque National Forest and in Puerto Rico. **Baño de Oro** is the smaller of two manmade swimming pools in La Mina Recreational Area, the other one been Baño Grande, located a few hundred meters to the north. The pool was in continuous use from 1934 to 1968 when it was closed to swimmers. The complex is a well-preserved example of the early New Deal era concrete and masonry construction left in Puerto Rico. At present **Baño de Oro** is closed to the public and pales in comparison to the visitation that its sister pool Baño Grande receives. The property is in relatively good structural condition and retains a high level of integrity of location design, materials, workmanship, and association. The effects of Hurricane Maria in 2017 damaged one of the stone masonry retaining walls located next to the check dam on the eastern end of the pool, causing the partial collapse of the wall. Beyond that, the property does not present any damages or alterations which could detract from its eligibility under criteria A and C for the association to the CCC/“New Deal” historic period and architectural styles.



Figure 1: Baño de Oro (view towards the southeast).

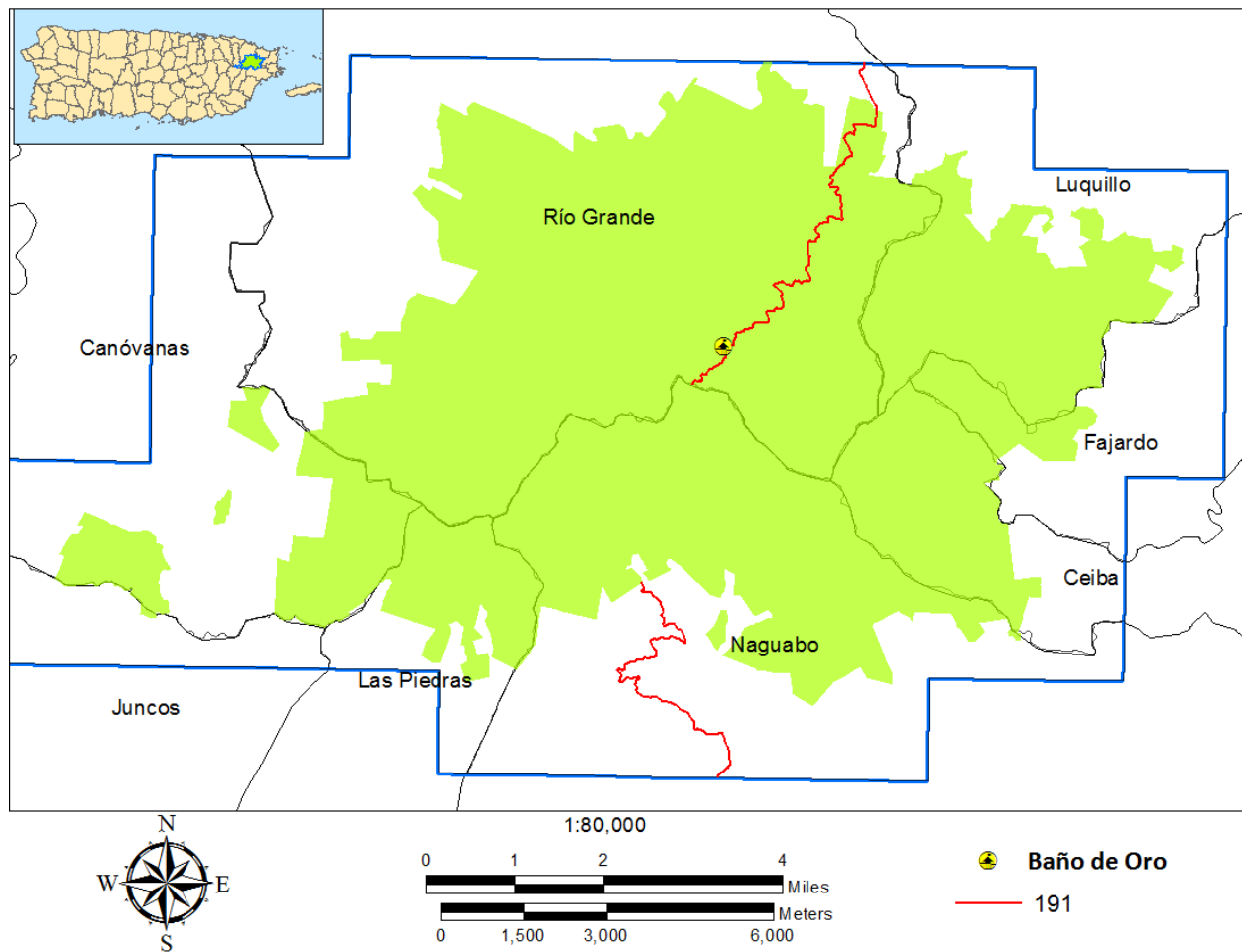


Figure 2. Location of the property (El Yunque National Forest Boundary Map).

Narrative Description

Physical Location: Baño de Oro pool is located on the northeastern part of the island in the mountainous zone of La Sierra de Luquillo along State Road PR-191, near Km. 12.1, within the boundaries of El Yunque National Forest, in the Municipality of Río Grande, Puerto Rico (Figure 3). The property was constructed in an unnamed creek (a branch of La Mina River) some 60 meters to the southwest of State Road PR-191. The site is located within the Palo Colorado Recreation Area (formerly called La Mina Recreation Area). The Palo Colorado recreation area parking lot is located 150 meters to the northeast of the pool area. The property can be accessed by hiking uphill for 60 meters on the Baño de Oro Trail leading to the pool site, starting from the Baño de Oro Hiking Trailhead on PR-191, Km 12.1.

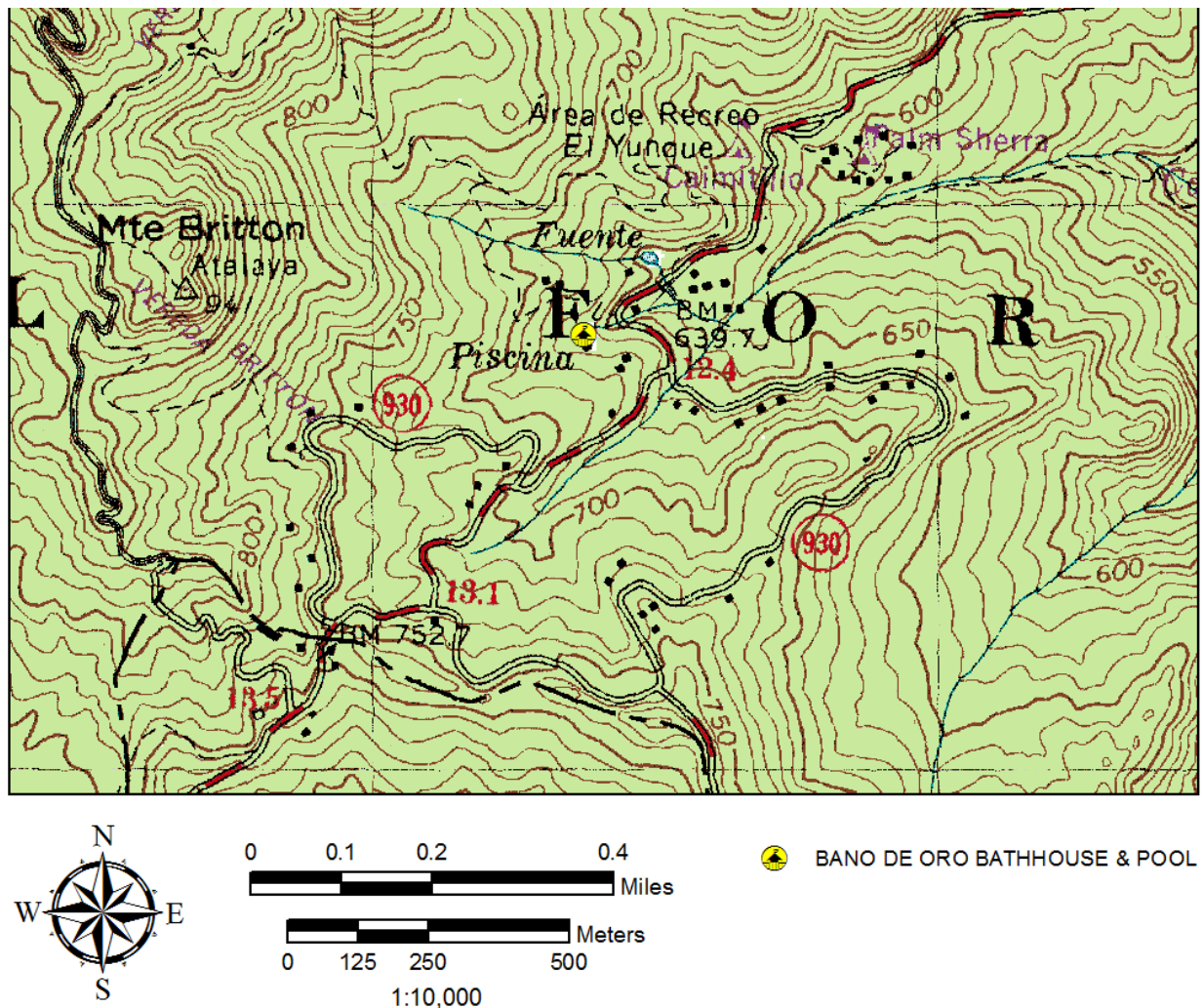


Figure 3. Location of the property in relation to the PR191 recreation area (El Yunque USGS Quadrangle).

Environmental Setting:

The property is located in the upper elevations of El Yunque National Forest (660 meters above sea level), just west of State Road PR-191, across the Palo Colorado Recreation Area parking lot, which is located 150 meters to the northeast of the pool. The property can be accessed by hiking uphill for 60 meters from the Baño de Oro trailhead along a paved trail leading to the pool site. The property is located within the boundaries of the Mature Palo Colorado montane cloud wet forest and is surrounded by lush tropical vegetation distinctive of this environmental setting. The property itself was built on the bed of an unnamed creek which is part of the La Mina River watershed.

Physical Characteristics:

Baño de Oro is composed by an ensemble of two distinctive features; (1) an irregular trapezoidal-shaped pool with associated concrete walkways, stone masonry stepped drainage (check dam),

plus a stone masonry retaining wall and (2) a concrete bathhouse constructed over an artificially raised platform with concrete retaining wall.

Pool

The pool (Figure 4) can be accessed from PR-191 via the Baño de Oro Trailhead. The trail leads west towards the entrance of the pool. The pool, built inside the causeway of the creek, is trapezoidal in shape and open at the west end where it connects with the unmodified stream which directly supplies it with water. The pool water containment area measures 21.33 meters east to west by 10.05 meters north to south. The pool was in essence created by the damming of the waterway to the east at the point of a fork in the creek, formed by a natural rock formation. On the northern branch of the fork, a polygonal uncoursed stone masonry dam was built.

The dam measuring 17 meters in height and 9.7 meters in width extends along the eastern edge of the pool from the Baño de Oro Trail to the rock formation which creates the fork in the creek. The southern fork is located 6.40 meters (120 degrees towards the southeast) from the southeast corner of the pool. This part of the property presents a check dam over which the water drains out of the pool.



Figure 4: View of the Baño de Oro pool (view towards the southeast).

This overflow drainage channel on the southeastern corner of the pool measures 81 cm in height and extends on a southeastern bearing for 5.53 m from the southeastern corner of the pool, where it ends at a set of 5 stone masonry steps over which water from the pool cascades towards the creek bed downslope (Figure 5). The step drainage (check dam) and dam are the only features that present the original uncoursed stone masonry style used in the original construction of the pool by the CCC during the early days of infrastructure development in El Yunque. Most of the stone masonry was later modified or replaced during the refurbishment of the pool in the late 1930s. The interior edge of the pool presents a 10-inch wide canal (concrete lip) which extends around the northern, eastern and southern inner edges of the pool (Figure 6). This canal drains into the overflow drainage channel (check dam) on the southeastern end of the pool.



Figure 5. View of the east check dam (view towards the northeast).



Figure 6. View of the drain canal along the edge of the pool (view towards the northeast).

A reinforced concrete walkway extends over the check dam drainage side. The walkway is located 36 cm above the overflow drainage channel (Figure 7), to create a flat walkway under which the water of the pool drains downstream into the creek. This platform gives access to a flat concrete surfaced platform located on the southeastern side of the property. Although now vacant, this platform was the location of the original timber bathhouse (Figure 8) and still retains some of the concrete checkered tiles that paved the original bathhouse area.



Figure 7: View of the concrete walkway located over the overflow drainage (view towards the southeast).

The eastern side of the dam presents three concrete benches and galvanized steel tube rails along the eastern edge of the property, directly over the dam, and around the concrete platform mentioned previously. The pool is flanked on its four sides by a concrete walkway (Figure 9). Both the northern and southern walkways are lined with a squared shape drainage canal. The northern drainage empties into the creek to the east and is the longer of the two, measuring 31 meters in length. The southern drainage measure 20.67 meters in length and empties directly into the covered overflow drainage of the pool through a one inch cast iron pipe that connects it to it. Located on the southern walkway of the pool we find a concrete bench (Figure 10), while the north walkway still has the original lifeguard chair (Figure 11).



Figure 8: View of the location of the original palm board bathhouse (1934).



Figure 9: General view of the north and south walkways around the pool (view towards the north).



Figure 10: View of concrete bench (view towards the southwest).



Figure 11: View of the remnants of the lifeguard chair (view towards the northwest).

A reinforced concrete retention wall with rounded corners extends along the southern walkway, directly abutted to the south of the drainage, creating a raised platform on the southern side of the pool (Figure 12). The flat raised platform is topped with a reinforced concrete pad and can be accessed by two independent sets of stairs, one on the eastern and one on the western sides of the platform. The complete platform measures 5.72 meters north to south by 18.42 meters east to west. A reinforced concrete bathhouse was built on top of the platform.



Figure 12: View of the concrete retention wall in front of the bathhouse (view towards the south).

Bathhouse

The current bathhouse is located on the artificially raised platform to the south of the pool (Figure 12 & 13). It consists of a flat-roofed, reinforced concrete building constructed on the Moderne Style with a covered porch in the Spanish Revival Style. It has a volume 17.9 meters long by 4.28 meters in width and an elevation of 3.55 meters (11.64 feet).

The main façade (northern façade) of the bathhouse consists of a central entrance bay (Figure 13), covered by a projecting, concrete portico with a flat roof, and flanked by two horizontal, running window openings, one on each side of the portico which presents fixed aluminum louvers. The rectangular central doorway has plain, concrete surrounded moldings and house board and batten double doors, each with a small hatch-window (Santiago-Cazul, 1998) (Figure 14). Opposite to the portico, the southern façade (backside) presents a rectangular window with a double row of glass bricks. The eastern and western façades of the structure each present two square window openings with aluminum louvers.

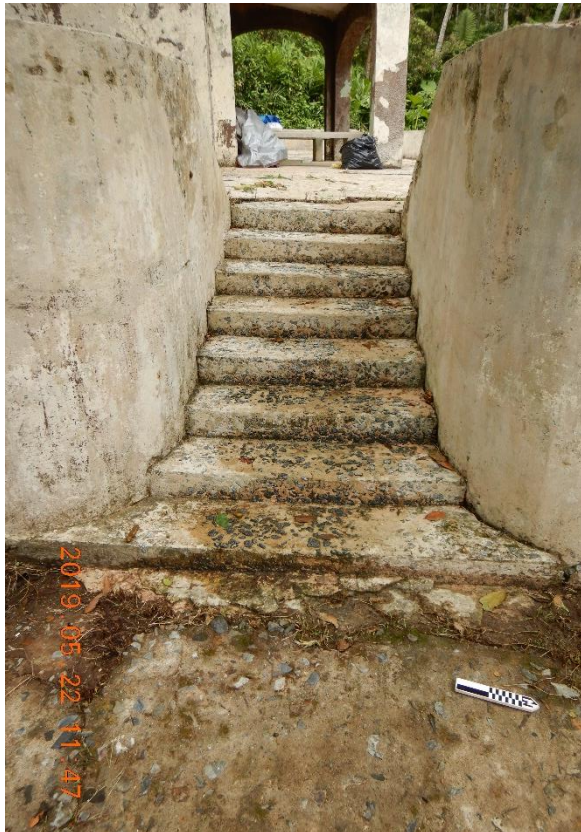
A 5 meter wide slanted roof portico extends in front of the central entrance bay. This portico is covered with terracotta roofing tiles (baked, unglazed, red earthenware) emulating the Spanish Revival Style that became common in that era of the building's construction, making this the only CCC era structure in El Yunque to represent that style. This gives a more tropical style to this bathhouse in comparison with Baño Grande. The bathhouse is accessed by a reinforced concrete staircase on the eastern and western side of the platform (Figure 15).



Figure 13. View of the bathhouse (view towards the southwest).



Figure 14: View of the central doorway (view towards the south).



left) a

The interior of the building is divided into three volumes. The central volume located directly behind the central doorway constitutes the entrance bay which served as the original foyer for the building (Figure 16). Extending into the east and west wings were the bathroom areas, ladies to the right of the entrance and gentlemen side to the left. The back and lateral walls on each bathroom present two horizontal running window openings with aluminum louvers.

The interior of each wing present original bathroom fixtures (Figure 17) and concrete subdivisions with concrete benches (Figure 18). The ceiling of the central volume presents one square skylight opening, while the side volumes each present a rectangular skylight opening at the center of the room. The main façade presents a layer of cement stucco, probably added in the 1950s to 1960s. This stucco has detached from the wall in many places. The back walls presents the béton brut surface original to the construction of the building. No documentation of the alterations could be located in the existing records.

The entire property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. No significant damage or irreversible alterations have happened which could detract from its eligibility under criteria A and C for the association to the CCC/“New Deal” historic period and Moderne and Spanish Revival architectural styles.



Figure 16: View of bathhouse central volume (looking towards the entrance).



Figure 17. View of the men's bathroom interior with original fixtures.



Figure 18: View of ladies bathroom interior benches and changing stalls.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register Listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

Architecture

Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1934-1968

Significant Dates

1934

1938

1968

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Civilian Conservation Corps

H. Randolph

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Baño de Oro is statewide significant under Criteria A and C.

Under Criterion A it qualifies for its historic association with the Civilian Conservation Corp and the events occurring during the Great Depression of the period between 1933 and 1942. The property is representative of the first infrastructure development projects that were implemented as part of the recovery and social aid programs executed by the Federal Government on the island during the 1930s. Under Criterion C it qualifies for being one of the early examples of the implementation of Craftsman construction style by the Forest Service in Puerto Rico represented by the creation of the first pool of La Mina Recreation Area in 1934. It also represents one of the first places of rural implementation of the Modern Movement of architecture, epitomized by the reinforced concrete bathhouse built on 1938, as well as the incorporation of the Spanish Revival Style in the design of the entrance porch.

The first stages of the construction of the property date between 1934 and 1935 when the recreation site was formed by the creation of a stone masonry pool and a wooden bathhouse located at the landing at ground level (Figure 19). The site formed part of a larger developed recreation area created by the Civilian Conservation Corps, called *La Mina Recreation Area*. The purpose for the area was the opening of the forest reserve to public recreational use. The construction of the property started with the erection of the stone masonry dam on the eastern opening of the creek (Figure 20) along with a drainage check dam, which once completed, created the pool impound area. Following that, the flagstone walkways around the pool were completed along with the lining of the banks with stone masonry walls.



Figure 19: View of original pool layout and wooden bathhouse in ca. 1936 (towards the southeast) (EYNF Heritage Program Records).



Figure 20: View of the construction of the Baño de Oro dam (1934) (EYNF Heritage Program Records).

At this time on the pool's history, the property sported a natural bottom, with a small platform raised to water surface level, near the central side of the pool (Figures 19 & 21). This platform served as a shallow standing point and proved very popular for taking photos as the location afforded the illusion of the subject "standing on water". Another important feature was a protruding diving board located on the southeastern corner of the pool, right in front of the original wooden bathhouse platform. A timber and mountain palm board rectangular bathhouse with a corrugated steel side-gabled roof was added to the ensemble and inaugurated in 1936 (Figure 19).



Figure 21: View of bathers standing on a platform inside the pool (EYNF Heritage Program Records).

The bathhouse was built over a poured concrete pad at ground level on the southeastern corner of the pool. It was a simple rectangular, post and lintel structure with five log columns distributing the façade into four equal bays (Santiago-Cazul, 1998). Each bay was in-filled with horizontal wooden logs (palm wood) and each window opening with two panels of horizontal wooden louvers. The original bathhouse area was paved with rectangular concrete tiles measuring 20 cm by 20 cm, some of which still covers part of the floor area around the old bathhouse location.

Probably because of poor results with wood, and due to the frequent floods in the area, the entire recreation site was redesign in 1938. The redesign of the pool area was significant. The original fabric of the pool had been of stone masonry in the first four years of the life of the property with a natural material bottom, very similar to that found at Baño Grande. Perhaps in a modernizing attempt, it was later decided to replace the stone masonry walls inside the pool with a reinforced concrete liner, and even-surface reinforced concrete bottom (Figure 22).

New reinforced concrete walkways were poured around the pool area and over the drainage creating a modern-looking walking surface. It is unclear from the available documentation if the original stone masonry walls were removed prior to the renovation or if the masonry was left in place and the new concrete walls were poured over them. Nevertheless, this complete overhaul of the property changed the character of the pool from a design intended to blend in with nature to one resembling a modern pool similar to the ones found at places like the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), which were gaining popularity at the time in Puerto Rico. The only elements not altered were the stone masonry retaining dam and drainage check dams located on the east end of the property.

The newly designed pool presented two different depths in order to create a variety of user enjoyment (Figure 22). The western side of the pool was generally shallow at between 3 to 4 feet in depth. From the edge of this “kiddy area”, the pool’s bottom suddenly dropped to a depth of 8 feet and sloped towards the east until reaching a depth of 11 feet 9 inches, creating a deeper wading area which allowed for diving from the diving board located on the southwest corner of the pool. A lifeguard elevated chair, made of tubular galvanized steel, was installed on the north side of the pool, near the northern drainage over the new concrete walking surface.

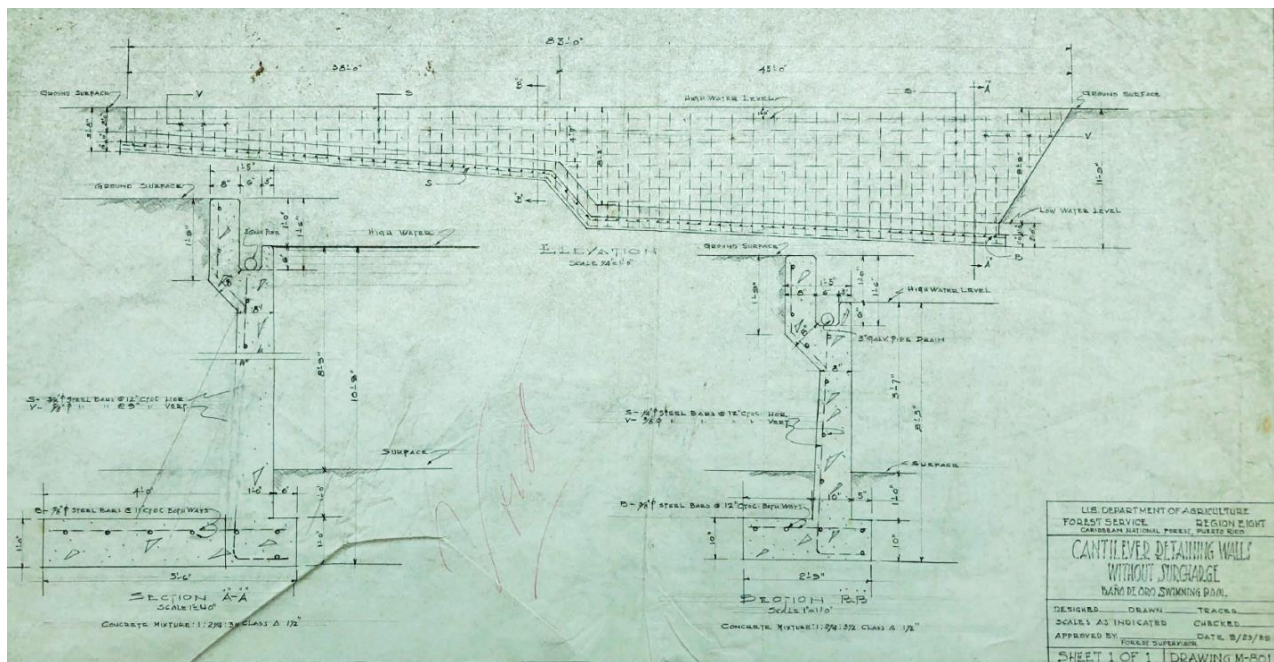


Figure 22. Cross-section plan of the pool (EYNF Heritage Program Records).

At the same time, the original bathhouse was replaced with a concrete building on the raised platform on the south side of the pool. (Walker et al., 1999). This raised platform was created by the construction of a reinforced concrete retaining wall with rounded corners typical of Moderne Style sinuosity. Prior to that, the new location of the concrete bathhouse and platform had been a vegetated area on the slope of the mountain. This raising of the bathhouse over the elevated platform was possibly the result of a need to keep the bathhouse from being flooded by the frequent flash floods that occur on that watershed and which plague the property to this date.

The concrete bathhouse, designed by Forest Service Engineer H. Randolph, stood in stark contrast to the original rustic design of the timber structure due to its modernism. As with Baño Grande, the design broke with the “integrated with nature” aesthetic design originally intended during the creation of the pool in 1934-1936. The use of the new style represented the construction tendencies put in place during the emergency relief programs of the era such as the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PRRA) (see eligibility discussion for details).

The concrete bathhouse was built using the “poured in mold” reinforced concrete technique, and to this day we can appreciate the imprints of the wooden casting molds, with its board-widths and wood grain imprints still visible on the sides, back and ceiling of the house. The simple façade of the building was the same as of today, with the central entrance bay covered by the projecting slanted roof portico. This slanted portico with the wide supporting arches and the terracotta roof tiles give this otherwise simple flat rectangular construction a more tropical style by emulating features of the Spanish Revival Style, in vogue on the island during that era.

This feature sets this bathhouse apart from Baño Grande, which follows the rigid and squared stylistic tradition of the International Style. The central doorway has plain, concrete surround moldings and house board and still sports the original 1930’s batten double doors with small hatch windows. The horizontal window openings each housed a set of contiguous fixed-louver aluminum windows. Each pane of louvers consisted of seven fixed louvers and a water-guard at the bottom (Santiago-Cazul, 1998).

Unique for the era of construction, the bathhouse also sported built-in electrical wiring and fixtures, a luxury at the time of construction, but one afforded by electricity provided to the La Mina Recreation Area through its connection to the Rio Blanco hydroelectric plant in Naguabo. Access between the raised bathhouse and the pool was achieved through the use of two sets of staircases located on the eastern and western edges of the raised platform respectively. The staircase on the western side leads directly to the entry steps of the pool (see the right side of Figure 23).

By the early 1940s, the pool had been altered from its original Craftsman Style of the early 1930s to the reinforced concrete look it sports today. The changes created a thoroughly modern property that contrasted with the ensemble of greenery of the forest (Figure 23). This renovation thus created a juxtaposition of greater divergence than Baño Grande, which retained the more rustic look of the Craftsman Style in and around the pool’s area. No photos of this renovation process have been located to date.

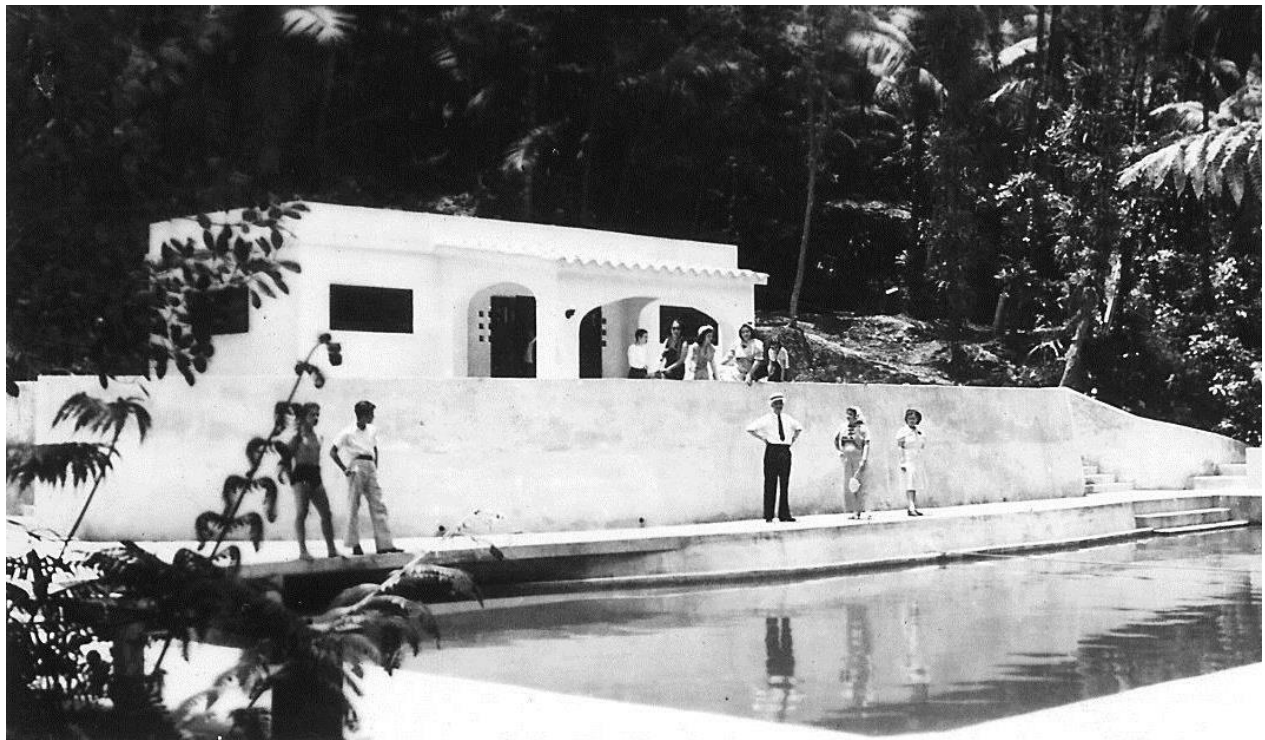


Figure 23. View of the concrete bathhouse and redesigned pool (ca. 1940) (EYNF Heritage Program Records).

In 1955 the Caribbean National Forest was designated as the Luquillo Experimental Forest. As a result, the Forest Service administration shifted its focus mostly to scientific research and all other operations were delegated to contractors and the state government (Wadsworth, 1964). As part of those policies, the facilities at La Mina Recreation Area (including the pool) were put under a thirty-year term special use permit to the Commonwealth Public Parks and Recreation Administration (PPRA) (Forest Service, 1961).

The pool itself did not suffer any major modifications during the following years of operation until it was closed to the public. One of the major issues created by the design of the pool was that of maintenance. Contrary to the design of the later built Baño Grande, which incorporated a sluice gate to drain the pool for cleanup, **Baño de Oro** did not present any such features. This meant the only way to clean the pool was to manually drain and dredge it while diverting the creek flow through the northern drainage canal. As a result the pool tended to retain a large amount of silt, especially after severe weather events. Due to lack of proper maintenance for decades the entire pool became silted to the brim.

In 1968, the operation of La Mina reverted to the Forest Service after the PPRA consistently failed to meet Forest Service recreation program standards for the operation of the recreation area during the previous decade (Hill, 1967; Hofeldt, 1968). The actual closure date of the pool is not very clear, but from internal memos of the agency still on record, it appears that the site ceased operations as a bathing facility in 1968. The records indicate that the site was closed due to safety concerns (“rowdy crowds”), unauthorized use outside operation hours, Forest Service liability due to the drowning of nine swimmers in the previous decade (Hofeldt, 1968) and the continuous

silting of the pool. It was then decided to use the site as a scenic spot. This action had been considered by the agency since 1963 according to internal agency memorandums (Wize, 1966).

By the early 1970s, the diving board had been removed and the pool was used as a scenic area, but swimming remained prohibited (Figure 24). The lack of constant cleaning meant that by the mid-1980s the pool had silted up considerably. To limit visitor access to the pool a galvanized steel pipe barrier was erected across the entrance of the pool, ending its recreation use.

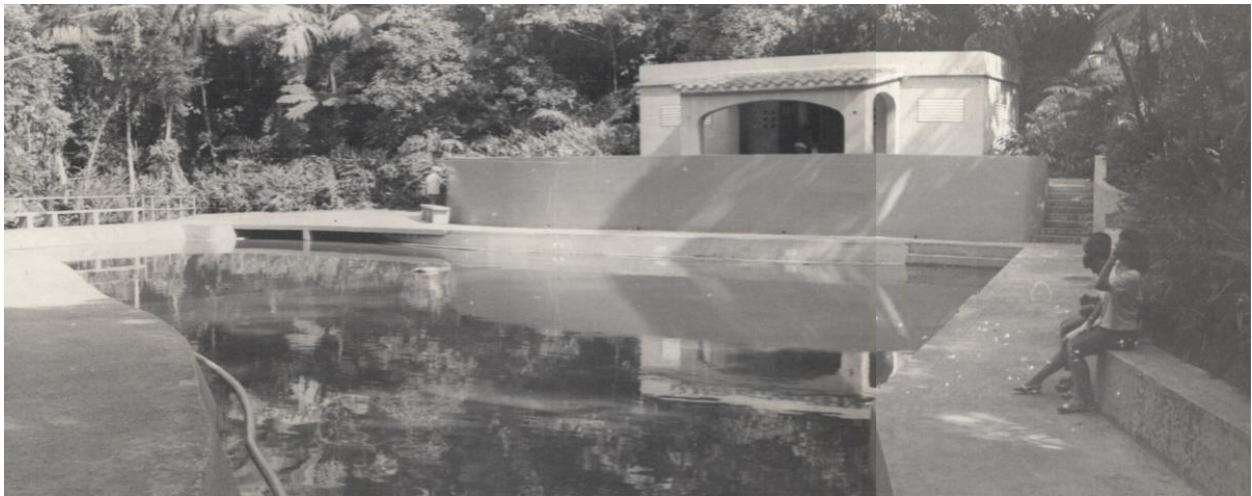


Figure 24. Panoramic view of Baño de Oro ca. the mid-1970s (EYNF Heritage Program Records).

Baño de Oro is one of two New Deal era pools in El Yunque which were determined to be eligible for inclusion in the National Register in 1988. The second pool, Baño Grande (which is also not in use) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. The *Strategic Plan for the New Deal Era Historic Properties on the Caribbean National Forest* (Walker et al, 1999) studied the **Baño de Oro** property and proposed that it could be refurbished for utilizing the site as a pool accessible to people with limited mobility. A similar policy is been proposed as part of the 2016 Forest Plan been drafted under the new 2012 Forest Service Planning Rule (USDA, 2012). In the meantime, given that the pool area is completely filled with sediment, which removal will be extremely labor-intensive, the site is been cleaned and condition to be used as a scenic spot and reopened to the public.

As it stands today **Baño de Oro represents** one of the most pristine examples of construction directly linked to the social, economic and political events that influenced the execution of the “New Deal” era programs in El Yunque. It stands as a witness to the development of new mentalities and practices in Puerto Rican society, chiefly the modern concept of recreation. **Baño de Oro** is also one of the earliest examples of the transplant of the Federal Government use of the Craftsman/Rustic style of architecture to Puerto Rico despite its later modification with concrete which almost completely obscured the stone masonry work at the property. The bathhouse also constitutes one of the earliest examples of the use of the Moderne Architectural Style by the Federal Government on the island with the interesting integration of Spanish Revival features. The integration of the Spanish Revival Style portico highlights an instance in which the CCC integrated

local architectural tendencies in vogue at the time on the island, giving it a more “criollo”¹ look and possibly one that was more familiar to the local population back during its construction. The use of that style element stands in stark contrast to the Craftsman Style and the Moderne Style which represented more dominant mainland aesthetics. As such **Baño de Oro** is the only CCC era property in El Yunque which presents all three styles into one property (Craftsman, Spanish Revival, and Moderne). The property retains the integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. No significant damages or alterations have happened which could detract from its eligibility under criteria A and C for the association to the CCC/“New Deal” historic period and architectural styles.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The historical significance of **Baño de Oro** (Criterion A) is related to its association with the “New Deal” initiatives and the Civilian Conservation Corps work which opened up the forest reserves like El Yunque to previously impossible uses such as that of developed recreation. This developed recreation, as defined by the North American standards, was different from the usual recreational activities practices of the Puerto Ricans. From the “American” worldview recreation meant “... hiking, picnic, swimming, trout fishing and driving to natural areas” (Barnes, et al., 2007, p. 17).

This represents both a change in the use of the forest lands and an introduction of new recreational opportunities to the islanders (ibid.). Most of those activities were not within the scope of what Puerto Ricans at the time considered recreational activities and often were not even feasible due to the general poverty level in Puerto Rico (i.e. taking a scenic drive through the forest). Nevertheless, the new connectivity afforded by the communication networks through the forest led to the creation of recreational infrastructure such as lodges, cabins, pools, scenic points and parking areas to support public visitation.

The actual placement of La Mina Recreation Area where **Baño de Oro** exists owes its existence to the vision of Assistant Forester George A. Gerhart and Forest Supervisor William Barbour. They recognized the potential of the area of the former La Mina CCC camp to be developed for recreation purposes. As stated on the 1936 La Mina Recreational Area Accomplishments and Proposed Recreational Developments report:

“... people have come to realize that forest recreation has a definitive value in their lives ... and so they desire to plan for the preservation of its possibilities.”
(Gerhart, 1936, p.6).

Under that scope the development of La Mina infrastructure, like **Baño de Oro**, not only related to the construction period during the New Deal Era but continued to be a significant feature in establishing Puerto Rico as a tourism destination. **Baño de Oro** was the first recreation pool built in the forest and represented one of the most significant recreational offerings at El Yunque

¹ Spanish form of creole, meaning literally ‘native to the locality’.

National Forest. For years the pool proved to be so popular with the visitors that a year after construction, it was obvious that its size was too small to meet the recreation demands from the public. Subsequently, a second, larger pool was commissioned for construction to supplement the offering of **Baño de Oro**. That second pool, Baño Grande was constructed in 1936 to be three times the size of **Baño de Oro** (Gerhart, 1936), thus extending the recreation capacity of La Mina Recreation Area.

The location of the pools was intentionally chosen to provide easy access to the public, who could reach the pools via the newly constructed road PR-191. In tandem, both pools provided ample bathing space for La Mina Recreational Area guests escaping from the lowland high temperatures (Gerhart, 1936, p.9). In such an expectation we can read the desire of the CCC era planners to have the National Forest become a hub for relaxation and fun, besides the stereotypical, mission-oriented timber extraction common to the Forest Service. The development of the concepts and practices of recreation after the American invasion, (such as that of use of swimming pools) responds to North American influences and their perspectives of what constituted recreation. As early as 1907 official policy of the Forest Service written in the “*The Use of National Forests*” book acknowledges the use of the forest as playgrounds for the people (Williams, 2000). It is then, with the arrival of the “Americans” that nature and the National Forest in Puerto Rico started to be portrayed as a place where to go for enjoyment and relaxation, a place to escape into nature.

It is true that people in Puerto Rico have been recreating and using natural swimming pools since prehistoric times. But the modification of natural settings with the construction of predetermined infrastructure to create a suitable and proper space for swimming could be regarded as an American transplant to the island. It should be noted that such constructions in the first half of the 20th century were not commonplace in Puerto Rico. Mostly they were present in places where American influences over the use, development or creation of carefully delimited recreation spaces existed. The work of “Las Tres C” on the island generated a new image of El Yunque through the recreational reconstruction of the forest (Valdes-Pizzini et al., 2011). **Baño de Oro** is one of only two remaining examples of the transplant of those views by the direct actions of the Forest Service in Puerto Rico via the CCC program in El Yunque National Forest.

The influences of the policies developed and implemented during the “New Deal”, thanks to the direct intervention of the Forest Service and the CCC, helped redefine the value of nature and the forest on the Puerto Rican psyche. The forest was constructed and presented as a civilized nature where the juxtaposed opposites of cultural and natural could coexist (Pabón-Charneco, 2010). During that period of hard times, the forest began to be portrayed as an escape, a natural refuge from the daily sufferings of the epoch. The development of such architecture allowed the public visiting El Yunque to experience a sort of pristine nature different from the rural, manmade farming landscapes more common throughout the island.

CCC architecture can be regarded as an important contribution to public welfare. That architecture enabled enduring changes in the quality of life of the Puerto Ricans and allowed the development of the mentality of nature appreciation. The construction of facilities such as **Baño de Oro** thus was not only instrumental in providing unemployed men with work, but also in developing new views. Such construction projects facilitated a new innovative way of relating to nature (ibid.) which led to our current perspective of nature enjoyment and conservation. Those influences were very significant in Puerto Rico; so much so that in the public's view El Yunque reclaimed the semi-sacred aura, which many claim existed in pre-Columbian times. The forest started then to be perceived as a sacred place, not as the realm of the supernatural (as allegedly in prehistoric times), but as a place for the protection, conservation, and enjoyment of nature.

Also, of historical importance (in the pragmatic sense) were the influences of the creation of the pool infrastructure in later mid-20th-century history and architecture of the island. The experiences acquired by the local men during construction works such as those of **Baño de Oro** signified the acquisition of new skills and knowledge which were instrumental during the implementation of the “New Deal” relief efforts outside the forest reserve. The creation of affordable concrete housing by the PRRA had its experimental station in CCC projects like those of El Yunque. Beyond the PRRA / CCC era, such skills and knowledge provided by the “New Deal” programs were instrumental in the development of the industrialized post-war economy and the resulting urbanization of the island. The architectural influences are described in the following section.

Baño de Oro is also significant for its design and architecture (Criterion C), which represent two periods of construction with three distinctive styles, all of which evolved in the period between the 1920s and 1938. The coexistence of the three styles is the result of the evolution of the CCC era work and plans to adapt to the local realities and conditions of Puerto Rico. **Baño de Oro** presents three very contrasting styles on a single property. The first of the construction “periods” is represented by the introduction of the Craftsman style or Rustic architecture to the island. That style arrived in El Yunque as a generic transplant of standardized building plans from the mainland Forest Service.

All initial constructions which the CCC created in Puerto Rico up to 1937-1938 were representative of that Craftsman style or some local variation of it. Variability from the original Forest Service CCC standard plans was a common practice in the agency given that each Region undertook to design buildings appropriate to climatic characteristics utilizing the predominant native building materials (Anonymous cited in Barnes, et al., 2007, p.19). As outlined in the 1936 La Mina Recreational Area Report (Gerhart, 1936) most of the construction of the trails, shelters, and buildings were built using timber, palm boards, thatched roofs, and local stone. Representative of that period was the first phase of construction of the pool. That first phase was intentionally built to blend with the landscape to appear almost as a natural occurrence within the riverbed (Santiago-Cazul, 1998). This contrasted with the later and “modern look” of **Baño de Oro**

bathhouse and extensive use of concrete in the property. The original pool was composed by the still in place stone masonry dam, masonry check dam, stone masonry bank walls, bathhouse with sheet metal slanted roof and palm board siding, and the concrete platform under it with its distinctive concrete checkered tiles.

The use of Craftsman architecture proved labor-intensive, requiring the efforts of many men. All the stones used in the initial constructions had to be carried one by one on the backs of the CCC enrollees from quarries at a lower elevation (Walker et al., 1999). The use of local material also proved to be unreliable because timber quickly rotted in the wet tropical environment of Puerto Rico (Anonymous cited in Barnes, et al., 2007, p.19). For such reasons the timber bathhouse was replaced by the existing reinforced concrete structures a few years later in 1938. The new building broke the initial “in harmony with the natural landscape” philosophy in exchange for the survivability and robustness afforded by the use of the reinforced concrete constructions. That construction technique proved a great adaptation to the local island conditions and ensured the survivability of the buildings in the face of the tropical storms and hurricanes that caused so much destruction to the island in 1928 and 1932.

The de-facto architecture used for the creation of such constructions by the CCC was the employment of the Modern Style of architecture, with its simple and minimalist designs. This included the use of the International and Moderne styles. In the case of the 1938 construction phase at **Baño de Oro**, the designers and the CCC decided to introduce significant elements of the Streamline Moderne Style in vogue prior to the Second World War. Elements such as the curved corners of the retaining wall and the pool, and the use of horizontally running architectural elements, such as the elongated windows and bands, are characteristic of that stylistic expression present at **Baño de Oro**. Most of the constructions on that style tend to be found in urban contexts around the island. These include various buildings listed in the National Register, such as the Normandy Hotel in San Juan, whose construction started on the same year of the second phase of **Baño de Oro** (1938). Yet, the employment of that Streamline Moderne Style in a non-urban context through the nation is quite limited and extremely rare in the context of the Forest Service. In the case of the New Deal Era constructions of the CCC in Puerto Rico, **Baño de Oro** represents the only evidence of the use of the streamlined curves in a forest building in Puerto Rico. As such the implementation of the modern paradigms and styles can be seen as the adoption of the simplistic streamlined beauty of the 1938 renovation, supported by the conscious and pragmatic use of architecture which afforded robustness, survivability and low construction costs.

Still, it seems that at **Baño de Oro** the complete use of the style might have been conceived as being too foreign by the architect, because the designer decided to incorporate elements of a third architectural style popular in Puerto Rico for the first few decades of the 20th century, that of Spanish Revival. Although conceived in the United States, the Spanish Revival (aka. Mission Revival Style) was appropriated and imported to the island by a new group of Puerto Rican

architects educated in the United States, such as Rafael Carmoega and Pedro Castro. They found in the style “...an artistic and physical poetical expression, which permitted the search of an insular style” (Llanes-Santos & Gala-Aguillera, 2004). The Spanish Revival Style became popular in Puerto Rico among the local bourgeois class of society in their constructions in the 1920s, especially in metropolitan areas such as San Juan. The architecture was used as a means to monumentalize local identity and political feelings among a certain portion of Puerto Rican society who were actual Spanish migrants, some whom still viewed themselves as Spanish or those who felt strong links to their Spanish heritage. This identity established itself in contrast to the incoming influx of resettled officials and “Americanos” that came to the island in the first decades of the 20th century, after the United States invasion of the island, following the Spanish-American War.

The “Americanos” brought with them a different worldview, culture, religious paradigms and socioeconomic system that contrasted with that of locals and which quickly took over the old systems left in place by the departing Spanish hegemony, or in some cases coexisted with it. This immigration of northerners was represented clearly in the development of new architectural creations in Puerta de Tierra, Miramar, Condado and Old San Juan. Their import of the Craftsman/Bungalow, Neo-Gothic, and Art Deco styles among others stood in contrast to the traditional Spanish architectural creations. Simultaneously to those came the transplant of modern institutions, practices, and tendencies, such as recreation among nature, which had its genesis at El Yunque. As a reaction to that, local bourgeoisie started to employ versions of the Mission Revival style or Spanish Revival in their constructions, but with newer materials like concrete.

The design of the porch of the bathhouse at **Baño de Oro**, with its slanted concrete roof supported by wide concrete arches and topped with terracotta tiles, seems like an attempt to integrate some locality to the modern, yet foreign, aesthetics employed in the CCC constructions in the late 1930s at El Yunque. It is unclear why such a traditional and structured U.S. Government entity (such as the Forest Service through the Civilian Conservation Corps) decided to incorporate an architectural style that became popular as a stylistic reaction of the local wealthy population to the effects of the imposition of the United States dominance over the former Spanish territory. The forced junction of both styles seems to represent an attempt at creolization of the 1930s view of modernity by the Forest Service in the context of Puerto Rico’s political and cultural realities.

Baño de Oro seems an experiment at integration between the Spanish and the American, an attempt of coexistence between the foreign and the local. That dichotomy endures in the Puerto Rican heritage to this day, but was much more apparent in the political climate of the 1930s. The architectural design of **Baño de Oro** attests to the continuous adaptive process undergone by the New Deal Era designers and builders as they tried to reconcile mainland expectations and plans to local desires and realities. Similar dynamics were apparent in other large scale constructions of the era, such as the building of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) campus in Rio Piedras by the

PRRA. Such constructions relied heavily on the use of the Spanish Revival Style as their main model for monumental creations.

The employment of reinforced concrete as the construction fabric is significant for the property, as it relates to the overall intent of modernization. The idea of developing concrete infrastructure on the island can be traced back to one of the principal postulates of the economic recovery plan outlined by Chardón in 1934 (Plan Chardón) (Scarano, 2016). The creation of the first concrete factory in 1936 on the island by the PRRA (Dietz, 2002), following Chardón's suggestions, made it possible to use reinforced concrete as the de facto construction fabric on the island. The characteristics of that material lent to the use of it by the relief program for the creation of inexpensive rural concrete housing. The material proved ideal to the development of the more monumental constructions during the era (such as the UPR bell tower) using simple design architecture such as the Moderne, International or Spanish Revival Styles. The terracotta roof tiles at **Baño de Oro** might have also been baked in another of the PRRA factory initiatives, the brick factory.

After World War 2 the use of concrete and the employment of the Modern and Revival styles became ubiquitous on the island for decades. Of the two, it was the Modern movement the one that became the inspiration for the Puerto Rican Urbanization movement which emerged later (Jopling, 1988). As such it replaced the predominance of other styles (including the pure *Spanish Revival* style) as the predominant architecture on the island and remains so till this day in modified form. The concrete bathhouse at **Baño de Oro** represents a period of evolution and coexistence of the then-emerging and competing models. With its straight lines, flat roof, horizontal window courses and overall simple and cold surfaces (Santiago-Cazul, 1998) the body of the bathhouse represent one of the early rural examples of the use of the Modern movement which came to dominate the architectural landscape of the island for the next 80 years (Barnes, 2012). The portico itself presents us with an attempt at integration of local sensibilities and is an example of the feedback and connection between the works of the CCC and the PRRA in the 1930s. The construction of the buildings of the CCC and the PRRA served as a “classroom” to instruct workmen in the application of reinforced concrete construction techniques, something that became instrumental in the subsequent development of public infrastructure on the island (Barnes, et al., 2007).

The training imparted to what later became the skilled craft tradesmen that developed the island infrastructure during the mid-20th century was the most enduring legacy of the economic recovery programs like the CCC and the Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration (PRERA) on the island (Dietz, 2002). It is in this aspect that the historical value of the structure directly intersects with its architectural significance. **Baño de Oro** represents an embodiment of the development of those skills, techniques, and styles which later greatly influenced the Puerto Rican architectural landscape and its late 20th-century history.

Baño de Oro illustrates the architectural adaptive evolution of that time better than any other of the New Deal Era properties within El Yunque National Forest. This property presents layer upon layer of adaptation to the local conditions, from the use of stone and wood to its replacement with more modern materials such as reinforced concrete. The replacement of the majority of the stone masonry features in exchange for reinforced concrete highlights an attempt at modernization of the site at a time when the island of Puerto Rico was experiencing the same reformation movements in its population, economy and sociopolitical structures, which led to the creation of a modern society in the 1950's.

Baño de Oro presents us with a property where the contrasting and evolving circumstances of the era try to coexist. The traditional base gives way to the concrete of modernity which breaks the idyllic coexistence of man and nature to replace it with a view of contrast and domination, with a larger emphasis to functionality over harmony. Yet the property is not a completely modern one, but interphases between the traditional and the new things to come. It tries to retain a semblance of tradition through the incorporation of local flavors, styles, and perceptions in the form of the partial use of Spanish Revival elements, while not fully immersing completely in that style. **Baño de Oro** represent an analogy to the adaptations and dynamics that were taking place at the time in Puerto Rico, between the divide of tradition and modernity, American vs. Spanish, bucolic vs. modern.

The property also represents a large evolving experiment, which in some instances failed absolutely, calling for on the spot adaptations (such as the relocation of the bathhouse), as well as total failures in design illustrated best by the lack of proper drainage features which proved disastrous for the continuous use of the site for its original purpose. Nonetheless, as an experiment, it guided the development of similar properties built later such as Baño Grande, which integrated all the lessons learned from the failures of **Baño de Oro** to create a more resilient and sustainable recreation property.

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_____. n.d. *View of Swimmers and Navy Officers at Baño de Oro in 1936*. [Photograph]. El Yunque National Forest Heritage Program Records.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☒ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property _____ Less than one acre

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☒ NAD 1983

1. Zone: 20N Easting: 205421 Northing: 2025665

Verbal Boundary Description.

The boundary of this property is limited, to the north, and south by the forested banks of the unnamed creek, to the east by Baño de Oro trail where the pool's access entrance, and to the west by the unmodified natural forest and unnamed creek beyond the concrete walkway and bathhouse concrete pad foundation.

Boundary Justification.

The property encompasses all of the resources (swimming pool, drainages, retaining walls, dam, and building) associated to Baño de Oro pool and bathhouse built by the Civilian Conservation Corps from 1934 to 1938.

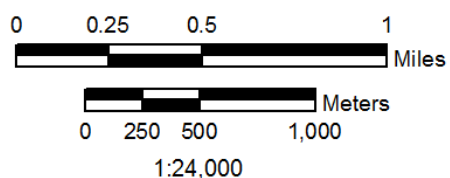
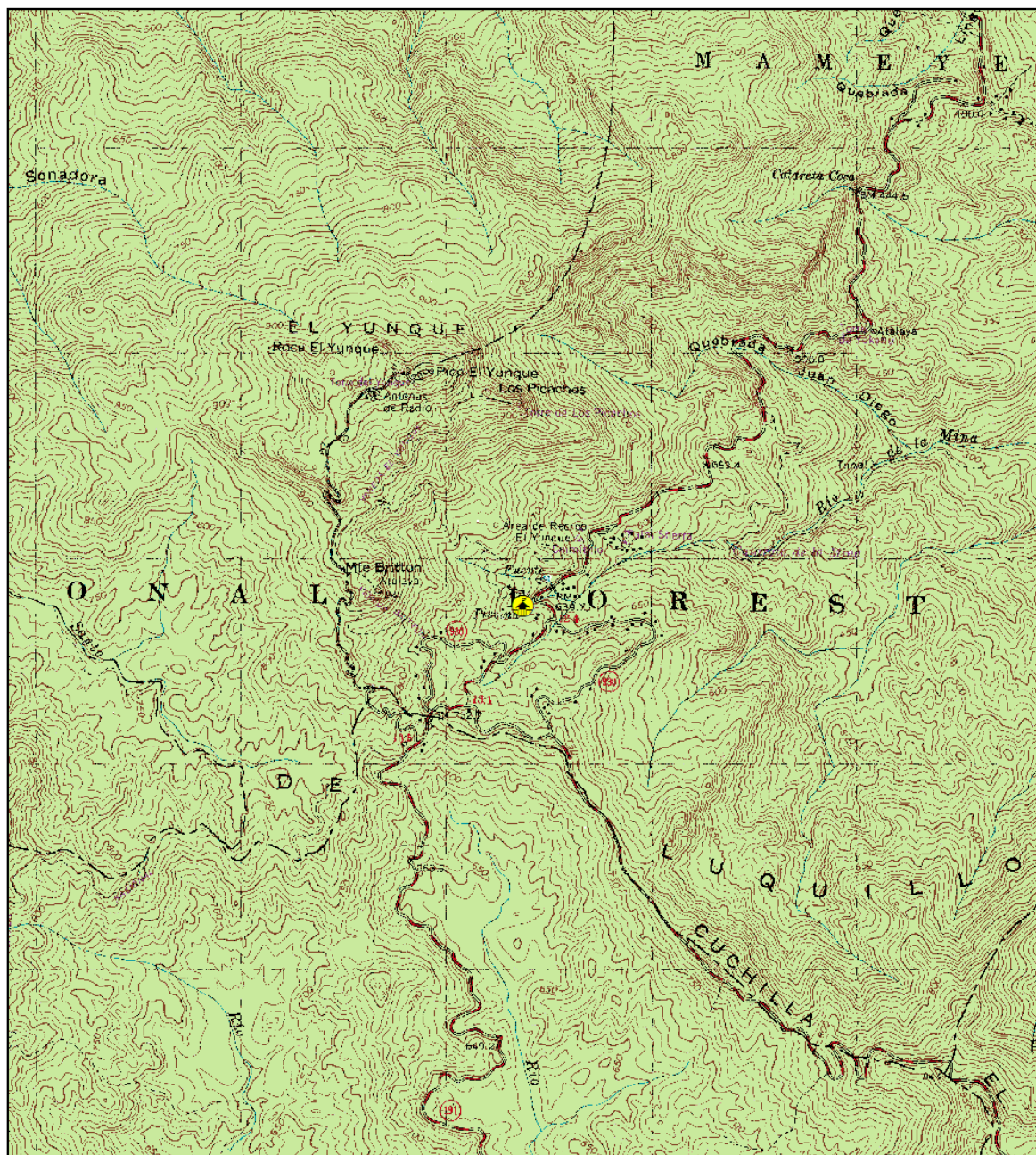
11. Form Prepared By


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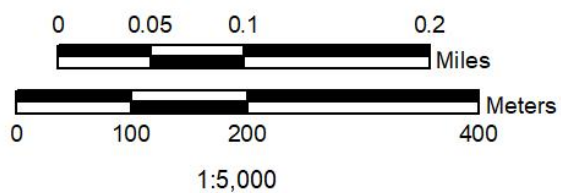
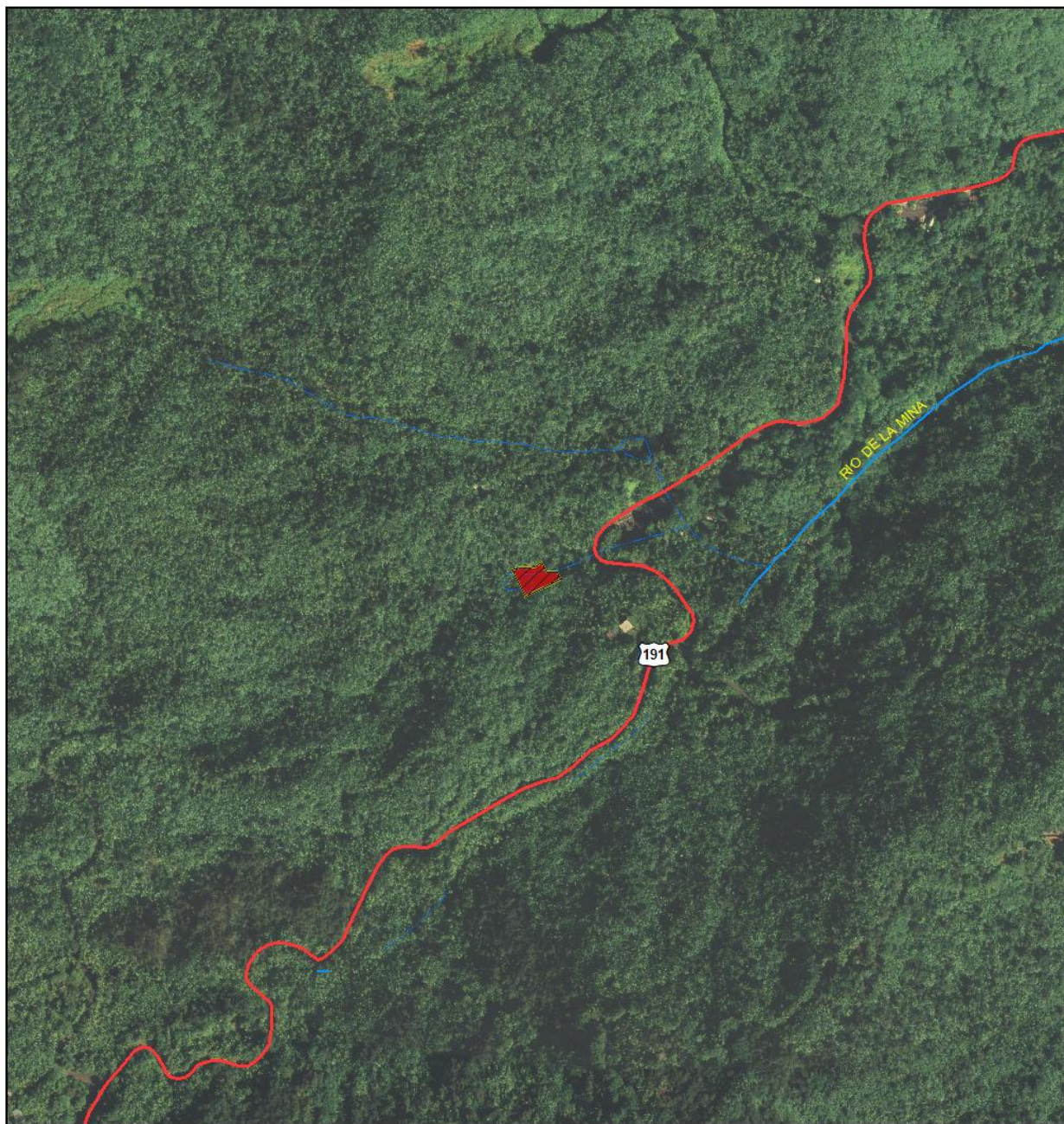
Additional Documentation


1. El Yunque Topographic Quadrangle 1:24,000- Showing the location of the property.
2. El Yunque Topographic Quadrangle 1:8,000- Showing the location of the property.
3. Property boundary map.
4. Sketch map of the property (to scale).
5. Sketch map of the Cantilever retaining walls without surcharge (to scale).



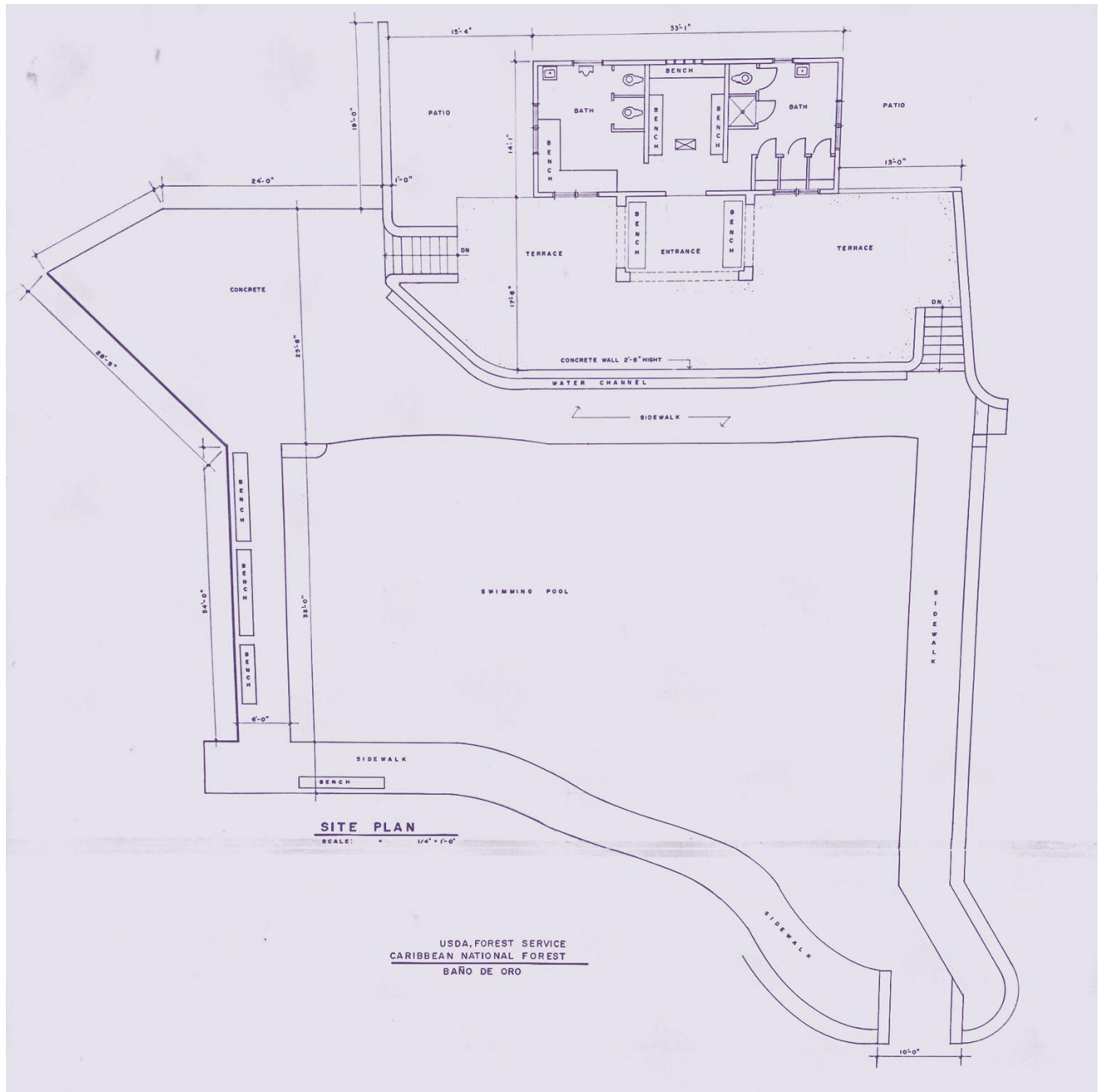
 BANO DE ORO BATHHOUSE & POOL

El Yunque Topographic Quadrangle 1:24,000- Showing the location of the property.

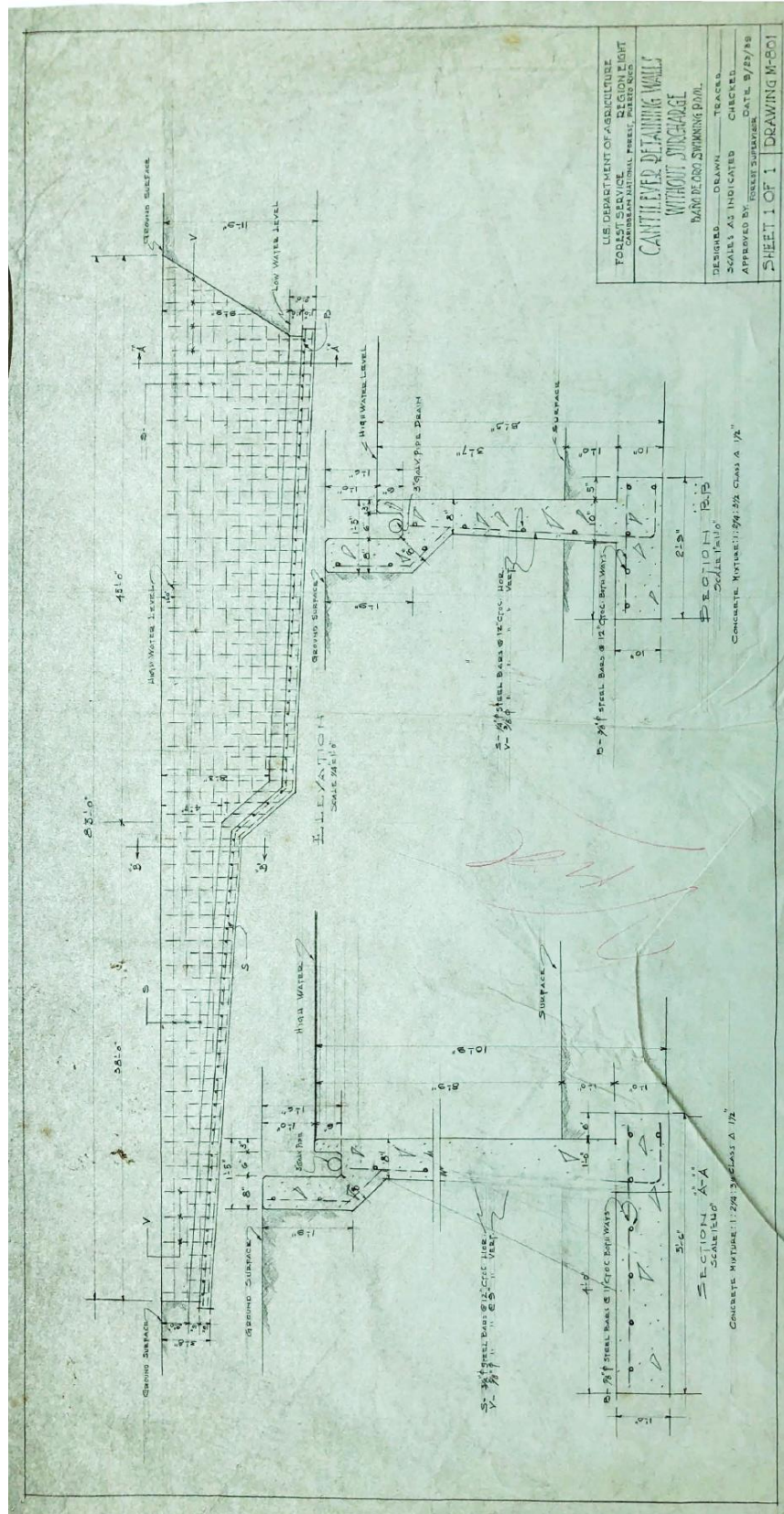


 Baño de Oro Boundary

Property Boundary.



Sketch map of the property (to scale).



Sketch map of the cantilever retaining walls without surcharge (to scale).

Photographs



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: July 2, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0001.

General view of Baño de Oro, camera facing towards the southeast.



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: July 2, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0002.

General view of Baño de Oro pool and bathhouse, camera facing towards the southwest.



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: May 02, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0003.

General view of the check dam, camera facing towards the southwest.



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: May 22, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0004.

View of the walkway surface at the original palm board bathhouse location, camera facing towards the southeast.



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: July 2, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0005.

General view of the north and south walking surface around the Pool, camera facing towards the north.



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: July 2, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0006.

View of the stone masonry dam at the end of the pool, camera facing towards the southwest.



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: May 22, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0007.

View of the lifeguard chair, camera facing towards the northwest.



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: May 22, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0008.

General view of the concrete retention wall, and bathhouse main façade, camera facing towards the south.



Name of Property: Baño de Oro

City or Vicinity: Rio Grande

County: Rio Grande

State: PR

Photographer: Raymond Feliciano

Date Photographed: May 22, 2019.

Location of Original Digital Files: El Yunque National Forest Headquarters. Rd. 191, Int, 988, KM. 4.4, Bo. Barcelona, Palmer, PR. 00721.

PR_Rio Grande_Baño de Oro_0009.

Bathroom platform western staircase, camera facing towards the south.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.